

The Lady of the Mount

by FREDERIC S. ISNAM
AUTHOR OF "THE STROLLERS," "UNDER THE ROSE," ETC.
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CHAPTER XX.

The Mountbank and the Soldier.

As the mountbank walked out of the apartment of the Governor's daughter, he drew himself up with an air of expectancy, like a man preparing for some sudden climax. Once beyond the threshold, his eyes glanced furtively back at the closed door, and, descending the stairs to the floor below, he carried his head a little forward, as if intent to catch unwelcome sound or outcry. But no raised voice or unusual noise reached his ear, and his footsteps, as the party issued forth into the street, responded briskly to the soldiers' pace. Still with the same air of strained attention, now mingled with a trace of perplexity, he followed his guard until called upon to stop.

"You are to sleep here!" As he spoke, the commandant opened the door of what seemed a low out-building, not very far from the general barracks, and motioned the mountbank to enter. The latter, after glancing quickly at the speaker and the soldiers behind, bent to step across the dark threshold, and, still stooping, on account of the low roof, looked around him. By the faint glimmer of light from a lantern one of the soldiers held, the few details of that squalid place were indistinctly revealed. A single stall whose long-eared occupant turned its head inquiringly at the abrupt appearance of a companion lodger; bits of harness and a number of traps hanging from pegs on the wall, and, near the door, on the ground, a bundle of grass, rough fodder from the marshes close by the shore. This last salt-smelling heap, the officer, peering in with a fastidious sniff, indicated.

"That's your bed! A softer one than you would have had but for the Lady Elise!"

The prisoner returned no answer, and in the voice of a man whose humor was not of the best, the commandant uttered a brief command. A moment or two the light continued to pass fitfully about the stable; then it and the moving shadows vanished; a key grated in the door, and the sound of the officer's receding footsteps was followed by the diminishing clatter of men's heels on the flagging stone. Not until both had fairly died away in the distance and the silence was broken only by certain indications of restiveness near the wheel. They say, though, he is not a great hand to sleep, but passes most of his time like a cat, prowling in and out the black passages and tunnels of the Mount. But, abruptly breaking off, "the play—that's what I want to know about! The end! How did it end?"

"I'm in no mood for talking."

"Take the bottle, an' it'll loosen your tongue!"

"No."

"What! you refuse?"

"Yes."

"Then," philosophically, "must I drink alone?"

"Not here!"

"Eh?"

"Will you get out, or—" and the mountbank stepped toward the other with apparently undisguised intention.

"So that's your game?" Quickly the soldier sprang to his feet. "I must teach you a little politeness, my friend—how we deal with uncivil people in the army!" And throwing off his coat, as ready for a bout at fisticuffs as for an encounter of words, the soldier confronted the clown. "When I'm done, you'll sing that song of the stich out of the other side of the mouth, and think your wicked peasant received a coddling from his master in comparison!"

But the mountbank did not answer—with words—and the soldier was still threatening, and painting dire prophetic pictures of what he intended doing, when a strong arm closed about him; fingers like iron gripped his throat, and, for some moments thereafter, although of unusual size and vigor, the man was more concerned in keeping his feet than in searching his vocabulary for picturesque imagery. Then, in spite of his struggles and best endeavors to free himself, he felt his head forced backwards; the grasp on his neck tightened. Still he could not shake off that deadly hold, and, aware that consciousness was gradually leaving him, his efforts relaxed. After that, for an interval, he remembered nothing; but with returning realization and a vague sense of stiffness in his throat, in a rough sort of way was prepared to accept defeat; acknowledge the other's supremacy, and seal that acknowledgment over the bottle.

Only the mountbank afforded him no opportunity thus to toast the "best man," with a long strap of leather snatched from one of the pegs, he had already bound the hands and feet of his bulky antagonist, and was just rising to survey his handiwork, when the other opened his eyes.

"Here! What do you mean?" exclaimed the soldier, when even the power vocally to express further surprise or indignation was denied him, in consequence of something soft being thrust between his teeth; and, mute, helpless, he could but express in looks the disgusted inquiry his lips refused to frame.

"Yes; what do you want?" the answer came more curt than courteous.

"What do I want?" the fellow repeated with a broad smile. "Now that's good! Perhaps it would be more to the point to ask what do you want? And here," indicating a loaf and jug in his hand, "I've got 'em. though

way the commandant should have cared, and ordered them brought—"

"He did?" said the prisoner, with a flash of quick surprise. "Well, I'm not hungry, but you can leave them."

"Not hungry?" And the soldier, who seemed a little the worse for liquor, but more friendly in consequence, walked in. "I don't wonder, though," he went on, closing the door, hanging his lantern above and placing the jug on the ground; "in such a foul hole? What you need, comrade, is company, and," touching significantly his breast, "something warmer than flows from the spring of St. Aubert."

"I tell you," began the mountbank, when the soldier, staring, got a fair look at the other for the first time and started back.

"Oh! What's this?"

"Eh, I took them off! You don't suppose I'd sleep in my white clothes in such a dirty—"

"Right you are, comrade!" returned the other, seating himself before the door on a three-legged stool he found in a corner. "But for the moment you gave me a start. I thought you some other person."

"What—person?"

"No one in particular. You might, unbuttoning his coat to draw forth a bottle, 'have been any one! But I dare say you have had them off in worse places than this—which, after all, is not bad, compared to some of the rooms for guests at the Mount!"

"You mean?" The mountbank looked first at the closed blinds; then at the door, and a sudden determination came to his eyes.

"Those especially prepared for the followers of the Black Seigneur, taken prisoners near Casque, for example!"

"They are dungeons?"

"With Jacques for keeper! The little sexton, we call him, because the prisoners go generally from the cells to the pit, and the quicklime is the hunchback's graveyard!"

"This Jacques—" A growing impatience shone ominously from the prisoner's glance; his attention, that of a man straining to catch some expected sound without, focused itself on the speaker. "This Jacques—what sort of quarters has he?"

"Oh, he lives anywhere; everywhere! Sometimes at the thieves' inn; again in one of the storehouses near the wheel. They say, though, he is not a great hand to sleep, but passes most of his time like a cat, prowling in and out the black passages and tunnels of the Mount. But," abruptly breaking off, "the play—that's what I want to know about! The end! How did it end?"

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OFFICIAL LICENSE LAW.

An Ordinance for imposing and collecting licenses within the City of Alexandria, Va., for the year commencing on the 1st day of June, 1912, and ending on the 31st day of May, 1913.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, That there shall be levied upon and collected from all persons engaged in the following businesses, the following taxes, viz:

1. On every license to sell ardent spirits by wholesale, as defined in an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia approved March 15th, 1910, the specific license tax shall be One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

(NOTE.—Any person desiring also to carry on retail must secure separate license but only pay one-half required by Section Two.)

2. On every license to sell ardent spirits by retail, as defined in an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia approved March 15th, 1910, the specific license tax shall be One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

3. On every license to sell as retailer and shipper of ardent spirits, as defined in an Act of the General Assembly approved March 15th, 1910, the specific license tax shall be Two Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

4. On every license to sell malt liquors by wholesale, as defined in an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia approved March 15th, 1910, the specific license tax shall be One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

5. On every license to sell at a bar malt liquors only by retail, the specific license tax shall be One Hundred Dollars.

6. On every license to sell malt liquors by retail, as defined in an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia approved March 15th, 1910, the specific license tax shall be One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

7. On every hotel or house of public entertainment Twenty-five Dollars and when liquors are sold One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

8. On every rectifier of distilled spirits or wines by any process One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars.

9. On all agents for the sale of larger beer, porter or ale, manufactured out of the city One Hundred and Fifty Dollars.

10. On each agent for the sale in the city of ginger beer, pop, mineral water, catnip or soda water, manufactured without the city, One Hundred Dollars, and said agent shall be privileged to distribute the same to his customers and to sell the same without tax on the horse or wagon used for the purpose.

11. On every person, firm or corporation conducting the manufacture of the sale of pop, ginger ale, sarsaparilla, or other aerated water from wafers, Ten Dollars.

12. On every commission merchant, or firm the specific license tax shall be Thirty Dollars.

13. On every person for the privilege of peddling or bartering, the tax shall be Twenty-five Dollars per year or Three Dollars per month.

14. On every person or firm for the privilege of selling or bartering in quantities in excess of five gallons to one person the tax shall be Twenty-five Dollars and any person, firm or corporation selling or peddling out of vehicle or tank wagon in quantities not in excess of five gallons shall be liable to pay a specific tax of Five Dollars.

15. On every person or corporation conducting the business of real estate, or to peddle under this license, a specific tax of Fifty Dollars.

16. On every auctioneer Forty Dollars, and no auctioneer shall show his license at public auction without taking out a license under this section.

17. On every person canvassing to sell books, maps, or pictures already published or peddling the same, Ten Dollars.

18. On every person canvassing for subscriptions to any book or map, print or picture not yet published, Ten Dollars.

19. On all agents for the sale of manufactured articles sold by them on commission, or otherwise, Twenty Dollars.

20. On every junk dealer, Twenty-five Dollars.

21. On every person canvassing or buying or any kind of goods, wares or merchandise, for sale to any junk dealer, or for sale to any junk dealer doing business in this city, Ten Dollars, and any person who can canvass under this license.

22. On every person or dealer selling antique or second hand furniture, or other goods, wares or merchandise, or dealer is not taxed under some other section of this law or is charged with a tax on capital.

23. On every person who shall sell tobacco or cigars in quantities not less than one box, except manufacturers, Five Dollars.

24. On every money broker, Forty Dollars.

25. On every money broker, or firm of brokers or bankers, having an office in the city, Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars.

26. On every pawn broker, Sixty Dollars.

27. On every commercial broker, as defined in the revenue laws of the State, there shall be a license tax of forty dollars. This does not apply to stock shops.

28. On every person or firm lending money on household goods, furniture, or other articles, or on any kind of personal property, wages, salaries, etc., there shall be levied a tax of Fifty Dollars per year.

29. On every proprietor of a bucket shop or dealer in puts, calls or futures on or for flour, grain, cotton, pork, lard, or oil, One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars, and no person or persons acting as agent or agents for any fire, marine, life, or other insurance company or companies, or for any company in the city of Alexandria, Fifty Dollars (for each company represented by such agent and for each assistant or clerk).

30. On every commercial broker, as defined in the revenue laws of the State, there shall be a license tax of forty dollars. This does not apply to stock shops.

31. On every person or persons acting as agent or agents for the sale of goods, wares or merchandise, there shall be levied a specific license tax of Fifteen Dollars for each company represented.

32. On every person or persons acting as agent or agents for any fire, marine, life, or other insurance company or companies, or for any company in the city of Alexandria, Fifty Dollars (for each company represented by such agent and for each assistant or clerk).

33. On every person or persons keeping a billiard table or pool table for public use, whether a charge be made for playing or not, Five Dollars on each table.

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44. On every exhibition of a circus or menagerie or either of them, One Hundred Dollars for each day's performance, and for every show or exhibition connected therewith, or traveling therewith, Five Dollars for each day's performance. On every exhibition or show where gifts or prizes are distributed or promised, Ten Dollars for each additional day, paid and performed are given within one week.

45. On every exhibition of skill, whether made for cash or not, which has a seating capacity of less than fifteen hundred, Forty Dollars; if over fifteen hundred and less than three thousand, Sixty Dollars; and for all over three thousand, Seventy-five Dollars, but this shall not apply to local amateur performances.

46. On the proprietor of any room fitted up for public exhibition for which rent is charged, Twenty Dollars; for assembly or other hall, Ten Dollars.

47. On every person selling or offering to sell refreshments in any such hall, room or tent, during such performance, or other exhibition, Five Dollars.

48. On every attorney at law, physician or dentist, whose practice does not exceed \$1,000 per annum, Fifteen Dollars; and those whose practice is in excess of \$1,000 and less than \$2,000, Twenty Dollars; and on those whose practice is more than \$2,000, Twenty-five Dollars.

49. On every owner or keeper of dangerous, photographs or sun, or other pictures, or any photographer doing business in this city, Fifteen Dollars.

50. On every person canvassing for the purpose of enlarging photographs, or sun pictures, or for making crayons, photographs, paintings or other pictures, whether a charge be made or not for such enlarged photographs, sun pictures, crayons, photographs, paintings or pictures, Twenty-five Dollars per year, or Five Dollars per month.

51. On every person canvassing for the sale of picture frames, or holders of pictures, Twenty-five Dollars per year, or Five Dollars per month.

52. On every agent for renting houses, or other buildings, Fifty Dollars per year, or Five Dollars per month.

53. On every person or firm except licensed merchants who shall sell or offer to sell, buy or offer to buy for any kind or description whatsoever, or other produce on "Change," there shall be levied a specific tax of Twenty Dollars.

54. On every merchant tailor whose stock in trade is less than \$500, Ten Dollars; and on those whose stock is more than \$500, Twenty-five Dollars; and on every proprietor of a tailoring establishment, other than a merchant tailor, Ten Dollars.

55. On every green grocer, Twenty Dollars; meaning by this term any person or persons who shall sell, or offer to sell, any kind of business butchers' meats and vegetables; and on every green grocer who does not sell meats, Ten Dollars.

56. On each and every butcher, or dealer in fresh meats, selling meats within the city, Twenty-five Dollars; and on each and every butcher or dealer in fresh meats, selling outside of the city, Ten Dollars.

57. On every person canvassing for the purpose of buying any matter of subsistence, and who shall sell the same within or outside of the city, Ten Dollars; and on every person canvassing for the purpose of buying any matter of subsistence, and who shall sell the same within or outside of the city, Ten Dollars.

58. On every fish dealer, wholesale or retail, Ten Dollars.

59. On every person or firm selling coal or wood, or either of them, there shall be levied a specific license tax of Five Dollars for each wagon used for the delivery and sale of coal and on every person or firm selling a horse or small quantities a specific license tax of Five Dollars shall be levied.

60. On every person or firm selling coal and wood, or either of them, there shall be levied a specific license tax of Five Dollars for each wagon used for the delivery and sale of coal and on every person or firm selling a horse or small quantities a specific license tax of Five Dollars shall be levied.

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76. On every oyster dealer, there shall be a specific tax of Three Dollars.